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The re-emergence of the Chinese press in post-Suharto Indonesia¹

Chang-yau Hoon

During the whole 32 years of Suharto's regime (1966–98), Chinese publications and the use of Chinese language in public were officially banned in Indonesia. As a result, printed matter in Chinese characters that entered Indonesia was classified as 'prohibited imports' (Heryanto 1999: 327). This prohibition came to an end after the fall of Suharto, as part of the process of democratization and *Reformasi*. The post-Suharto era of *Reformasi* is thus celebrated for the dramatic revival of the freedom of the press and media in Indonesia and many previously banned as well as new publications have emerged since Suharto's fall. The Chinese press and media joined this florescence and many new Chinese-language daily newspapers and magazines soon appeared. A local Chinese media expert describes this period as 'the time when a hundred flowers bloom (*baihua qifang*)' (Li, Z. H. 2003: 323).

Juxtaposing the Chinese press in the pre-Suharto era with its current scene, it is possible to identify both continuity and discontinuity from the earlier Chinese press. On the one hand, most post-Suharto Chinese presses are operated by media practitioners who worked in this field during the pre-Suharto era. These people belong to an older generation and are mostly over 55 years of age. Their influence on the contemporary Chinese media has manifested itself in a focus on nostalgia and traditional Chinese culture. Notably, the Chinese press has become a 'space' for these people, who had been silenced over the three previous decades, to speak out and socialize. However, it is unfortunate that the significance of the differences in experience, education and language background between the older generation of media practitioners and the potential younger generation of readers has resulted in a limited readership among the younger generation.

On the other hand, whereas the Chinese press in the past spoke to readers as *huaqiao*, or 'overseas Chinese', the contemporary Chinese press is an ethnic press that seeks to address its audience as *huaren*, or 'ethnic Chinese', with multiple identities. Before the Second World War, many Chinese in Indonesia were indeed predominantly *huaqiao* in identity. In Suryadinata's term, 'they were sojourners rather than settlers' who intended to return to their homeland (2001: 55). However, Indonesian nationalism and independence have transformed most *huaqiao* to *huaren* with local identities,

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as the majority of the Chinese population have become Indonesian citizens and are no longer sojourners who plan to return to their ancestral land.² This is not to say that they can ignore the 'China factor' (Sun, Introduction in this volume). In fact, as this chapter demonstrates, there is a general obsession with China in the local Chinese press, whether deliberate or not. This transnational or diasporic imagination is motivated not only by globalization of cultural products but also by the growing significance of the Chinese economy. The negotiations between the Indonesian-language Chinese press and the Chinese-language press, older-generation media practitioners and younger-generation readers, the global and the local, politics and culture, and Chinese and Indonesian identities constitute the core of this chapter.

The aim here is to map the re-emergence of the Chinese press after its disappearance from Indonesia's public space. I shall commence with a brief historical overview of the Chinese press in Indonesia and then explore issues related to representations of 'Chineseness' through an analysis of several Chinese newspapers and magazines that re-emerged after 1998. The intention of this chapter is not simply to document the evolution of the Chinese press in Indonesia. Rather, it sets out to unpack the complex meaning of the 'Chinese press' and 'Chineseness' in Indonesia and, this, of course, cannot be understood without some knowledge of the historical background. The focus of this chapter, however, is about how, in many ways, Chinese identities in Indonesia are negotiated and reflected through the development of the local Chinese press at different historical junctures. These negotiations first took place between the *totok* (China-born, 'pure' blood) and *peranakan* (local-born or mixed blood) Chinese identities during the colonial era; then between *huaqiao* and newly 'imagined' Indonesian (*huaren*) identities during the early Independence period, when political and ideological competition had reached its climax in Indonesia.

It would have been impossible for today's audience to understand the depth and complexity of the identity contestation during the above periods without the extensive documentations in the Chinese press during that era. The prohibition of Chinese publications during Suharto's era did not completely discontinue the tensions and negotiations between *totok*, *peranakan*, *huaqiao* and *huaren* identities. But, due to the closure of the Chinese media, these negotiations have not been adequately documented. As a result, scholars could not but generalize that the Chinese during Suharto's regime had been systematically 'Indonesianized', as if there were no identity politics or agency involved.

Defining the Chinese press in Indonesia

In order to understand the nature of the Chinese press, it is crucial to first understand the heterogeneity of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Far from being a culturally homogeneous group, the Chinese are heterogeneous and

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can be grouped differently in different periods. However, conventionally, they have been divided by scholars into two main parts, the China-oriented *totok* and the acculturated *peranakan*.³ Chinese-Indonesians before Indonesia's Independence accepted this identity and ontological distinction. The *peranakan* have resided in Indonesia for centuries but this does not mean that they had fully assimilated into the native population (Williams 1960: 13). Colonial ethnic policies, religion, economic position and the Chinese sense of cultural superiority were the main obstacles to complete assimilation (Amyot 1972: 49).⁴ Many of these people intermarried with the locals, adopted local culture and lost many features of their 'Chineseness'. The *peranakan* spoke one of the Indonesian languages or a type of Chinese-Malay language and, although the Chinese-Malay language was regarded as 'low Malay', it has become an integral part of Indonesian literary history and linguistics.⁵

Coming from different parts of China and speaking different Chinese dialects, the *totok* arrived in Indonesia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. This wave of migration included a significant number of women, which meant that Chinese men could take a China-born wife rather than a native wife or *peranakan* (Mackie and Coppel 1976: 8).

During the colonial times until the early period of Indonesia's Independence, the term 'Chinese press' referred to publications in the Chinese-Malay language (also known as the *peranakan* press) as well as those published in Chinese language. In fact, the *peranakan* press first emerged in the archipelago in the early 1900s, that is, a decade before the first Chinese-language press was published. The emergence of the *peranakan* press was inspired by the rise of pan-Chinese nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century. The *peranakan* press experienced a reawakened sense of Chinese identity whereby the Chinese people were attempting to rediscover their roots by demanding 'Chinese stories or something about China and about themselves in a language that they were familiar with' (Suryadinata 1978: 131). Chinese-language newspapers were published in conjunction with the growing Chinese-speaking *totok* community.

From the emergence of the first *peranakan* newspaper up to the Japanese Occupation, there were at least 45 *peranakan* newspapers and seven Chinese-language newspapers published in Indonesia (Pandiangan 2003). Almost half of the *peranakan* press appeared in the 1920s. During the 1920s and early 1930s, there were three different political streams within the *peranakan* community that were represented by three major newspapers: *Sin Po*, *Siang Po* and *Sin Tit Po*. *Sin Po* promoted Chinese nationalism and anti-Dutch colonialism and represented the orientation of both China-oriented *totok* and *peranakan*. *Siang Po* was pro-Dutch colonial government and represented the interests of the upper-class pro-Dutch Chinese business organizations. *Sin Jit Po*, which changed its name to *Sin Tit Po* in 1929, promoted Indonesian nationalism among *peranakan* Chinese (Suryadinata 1978: 134; Li, Z. H. 2003: 84). The *peranakan* press during the Dutch

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colonial era was characterized not by their business interests but by their engagement with idealism and political orientations. As Pandiangan (2003: 408) describes, '[t]he *peranakan* Chinese press did not simply report events; it opened up a space for a dialogue'. Hence, this press was an extremely powerful instrument that not only documented what was happening but actively engaged in the construction of discourses and the development of the Chinese society in that period. In fact, most of the famous *peranakan* Chinese figures who fought for the rights and shaped the national identity of the Chinese, and joined hands with Indonesia's nationalists to struggle for the nation's Independence, had a prominent role in the press.

However, Suryadinata (1978: 32) notes that, after the closure of Chinese schools and the Chinese press in 1966, most Chinese were 'Indonesianized' as they were forced to enrol in Indonesian-medium schools. Hence, it can be said that most Chinese who are below 50 years of age no longer read or write Chinese. This also implies a breakdown of the dichotomy between *totok* and *peranakan*. The Chinese in the post-Suharto era tend to identify themselves as Chinese-Indonesians since the terms *totok* and *peranakan* can no longer represent the heterogeneity of Chinese identity.⁶ Furthermore, standard Bahasa Indonesia rather than Chinese-Malay language is used in the Indonesian-language Chinese press. Hence, the section on the 'post-Suharto era' uses the 'Indonesian-language Chinese press' to refer to the post-Suharto Chinese press published in Bahasa Indonesia and 'Chinese-language press' to refer to that which is published in Chinese. The term 'Chinese press' is used, loosely, throughout this chapter to describe both the Indonesian-language press and the Chinese-language press in Indonesia.

Sin Po and the history of the Chinese press

'Older generation Indonesians, be they natives or Chinese, none of them have not heard of *Sin Po*' (Li, Z. H. 2003: 1; my translation). *Sin Po* was a weekly *peranakan* newspaper that was established by young *peranakan* Chinese in Jakarta on 1 October 1910. *Sin Po* became a daily newspaper in 1912 to meet rising demand and soon became one of the largest Malay newspapers in the Dutch East Indies (Li, Z. H. 2003: 2). The political objective of *Sin Po* was to promote Chinese nationalism. It positioned itself in opposition to *Siang Po* and took a strong stance against Dutch colonialism (see Li, Z. H. 2003: 1). *Sin Po* also shared the vision of *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (the Chinese Organization), the first pan-Chinese organization founded in Jakarta in 1900, to resinicize the *peranakan* by fostering Chinese education and culture.⁷ It published articles critiquing 'corrupt' Chinese customs and traditions practised by the *peranakan* Chinese, as well as articles on classical Chinese literature such as *Sam Kok (The Romance of the Three Kingdoms)* (see Suryadinata 2002: 53 and Li, Z. H. 2003: 2).

Sin Po first published its Chinese version (*Xin Bao*) in February 1921. Suryadinata (1978: 137) argues that *Xin Bao* was probably the first Chinese-

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language daily in Indonesia. The number of Chinese-language newspapers rose rapidly after 1920. It has been noted that the Chinese-language press took a more vigorous stance against the Japanese than their *peranakan* counterparts (Suryadinata 1978: 138). *Xin Bao* actively promoted anti-Japanese propaganda and mobilized the overseas Chinese to raise funds to support the war against the Japanese invasion of China (Li, Z. H. 2003: 10–11).

During the Japanese Occupation, all Chinese-language and most *peranakan* newspapers were closed down and many Chinese journalists were put in concentration camps because of their anti-Japanese sentiments. The exceptions were *Matahari* and *Hong Po*, whose sympathies were with the Japanese, despite protests from Chinese communities (Suryadinata 1978: 134; Pandiangan 2003: 407, 409).

After the war and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Chinese-language newspapers were polarized into pro-Beijing and pro-Taiwan camps. *Xin Bao* and *Shenghuo Bao* belonged to the former camp, while *Tiansheng Ribao* and *Zhonghua Shangbao* represented the voice of the Guomindang and were robustly anti-Communist. These newspapers' different political orientations often involved them in a 'war of words' (Li, Z. H. 2003: 19).⁸ *Xin Bao* mainly reported news related to the building of the new China and of Chinese societies in Indonesia. It still strongly identified itself as a *huaqiao* (sojourner) press and encouraged the local Chinese to unite and show their support for China. In the cultural sphere, *Xin Bao* still actively promoted Chinese culture and education, especially through the supplementary section (*fu kan*) of its newspaper (Li, Z. H. 2003: 19).

The supplementary section of the Chinese press played a crucial role in the development of language and culture. It provided a space for writers to contribute their articles or stories. These writings often represented the discourses that were dominant in the society at that time. Many Chinese who later became important figures in politics and literature in Indonesia were contributors to either the Chinese or Indonesian version of *Sin Po* and other Chinese newspapers.

Sin Po contributed significantly to shaping what is today referred to as Bahasa Indonesia. Many Chinese (mostly Hokkien, a dialect in Chinese) words – most of which are related to food – have become an integral part of the Indonesian language. And many of these words that are used in everyday Indonesian language, such as *teh* (tea), *kecap* (soy sauce), *juhi* (cuttlefish), *kue* (cakes), *tahu* (tofu) and *soto* (meat soup), have their origin in a Chinese dialect (see Li, Z. H. 2003: 26).

The ideological struggles between right-wing and left-wing Chinese-language newspapers continued until February 1958, when a regional rebellion took place in central Sumatra against the central Indonesian government. Taipei was accused of giving its support to this rebellion (Li, Z. H. 2003: 363). Consequently, all Chinese-language newspapers were banned in April 1958, although left-wing Chinese-language newspapers were allowed to republish a month later (Suryadinata 1978: 139). In 1960, all Chinese-

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language newspapers were once again banned following a major anti-Chinese outbreak in Indonesia. The ban was only lifted when China–Indonesia relations had improved (Suryadinata 1978: 139). However, the status of the Chinese-language press after 1960 was very uncertain and always subject to closure by the government.⁹

During the Guided Democracy period (1959–65), *peranakan* newspapers were under pressure to employ more indigenous Indonesians and to change their titles to Indonesian ones (Suryadinata 1978: 136). *Sin Po* first changed its name to *Panca Warta*, and later changed it to *Warta Bakti* – a name given by President Sukarno (Li, Z. H. 2003: 43).¹⁰ This change of name also represented a shift in identity for *Sin Po* – from promoting Chinese nationalism and embracing a *huaqiao* identity to espousing Indonesian nationalism and endorsing Indonesian nationality. By this time many Chinese had already become Indonesian citizens (Li, Z. H. 2003: 43).

Xin Bao only re-emerged in November 1963 after having been forced by the government to close down in 1958. It changed its name to *Zhongcheng Bao* (which literally means ‘loyal newspaper’), the Chinese translation of *Warta Bakti*. The re-emergence of *Xin Bao* gave the Chinese-language press in Indonesia a facelift. After 1963 it had to forsake its *huaqiao* mentality and shift its orientation and loyalty entirely to Indonesia, as it was now owned by Indonesian nationals (Suryadinata 1978: 140; Li, Z. H. 2003: 43). *Zhongcheng Bao* pledged its loyalty to Indonesia and Sukarno by publishing the president’s speeches and political thoughts every day on the front page of the daily (Li, Z. H. 2003: 44).

However, the Chinese-language press after 1960 was short-lived. On 30 September 1965, the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) and Beijing were allegedly involved in a coup attempt. Together with left-wing *peranakan* papers such as *Warta Bakti*, all Chinese-language newspapers were indiscriminately branded pro-PKI and banned in October 1965. Most directors, editors and journalists were arrested and detained on Buru Island without due legal process, marking the end of *Sin Po* and the other Chinese newspapers (both Indonesian and Chinese-language) in Indonesia (Pandiangan 2003: 413).

Suharto’s New Order: the dark ages for the Chinese press

Chinese-Indonesian writers have called the Suharto regime (also known as the ‘New Order’) the ‘dark ages’ of Chinese culture, because all ‘three treasures’ (*san bao*) of Chinese culture – Chinese organizations, Chinese-medium schools and Chinese media¹¹ – were banned by the New Order government (Li, Z. H. 2003: 323; *Yinhua Zhisheng*, July 2004, p. 14). The New Order government perceived ‘Chineseness’ to be incompatible with Indonesia’s national personality and problematic for national integration and unity. One of the reasons was that the Chinese came under suspicion of supporting leftist politics and the PKI, both of which were allegedly involved

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in the abortive coup attempt of 1965. Moreover, the dominant position of the Chinese in the Indonesian economy led the Suharto government to label 'Chineseness' as 'The Chinese Problem' (or *Masalah Cina*).

Viewing 'Chineseness' as a 'problem' that threatened national integration and unity legitimized the New Order government's attempt to solve it. The policy makers endorsed a military-backed 'Assimilation Programme' (*Program Pembauran*), which prescribed the total dissolution of any marks and identities of 'Chineseness'. After 1966, Chinese publications and the use of Chinese language in public were officially banned in Indonesia. No Chinese-language press was permitted except the government-sponsored *Yindunxiya Ribao* (*Harian Indonesia* or *The Indonesia Daily*), which aimed to convey the official voice of the government to the Chinese community, especially to those who did not read Bahasa Indonesia.

The editors of *The Indonesia Daily* were native Indonesians who were related to the military newspaper *Berita Yudha* (Suryadinata 1978: 140–1). Coppel (1983: 162–3) notes that all copies of *The Indonesia Daily* were written first in Indonesian and then translated into Chinese. The translations were checked carefully by Sinologists on the staff. This newspaper was known to be a tool used by the military to indoctrinate the Chinese community with new restrictions during the New Order. Sudharmono, the secretary-general of the Indonesian Hakka Association, argued that, '[t]he paper was a lie, to make the world think that we [Chinese-Indonesians] were not oppressed' (Djalal 2001).

The relationship between *The Indonesia Daily* and Chinese-Indonesians can be described as a love–hate relationship – they value this newspaper, yet, at the same time, despise it. According to Sukisman, the chief editor of *The Indonesia Daily*, the newspaper reached its distribution peak in the early 1990s, when about 100,000 copies were sold every day. He also noted that the advertisement contents of the newspaper were mostly obituaries, marriage and divorce notifications, and announcements of the opening of new businesses (*Kompas*, 14 January 2001). This shows that *The Indonesia Daily* played a key role in mediating information within the Chinese community in Indonesia during an era when no other Chinese news media were allowed. Chinese-Indonesian writers also strategically utilized the supplementary section of this newspaper to publish their articles and poems (Wen 2003: 368–9). Hence, in spite of the resentment of the military control of this newspaper, it had ironically become one of the 'agencies' that enabled the Chinese to be informed about their 'community' and prevented Chinese-language literature from disappearing from the face of Indonesia.

'Out of darkness': the Chinese press in post-Suharto's Indonesia

After experiencing over three decades of darkness, the Chinese-Indonesian press can finally welcome the light of the morning sun!

(Huang 2003: 391; my translation)

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To the Chinese community, especially those who had been deprived of the opportunity to use Chinese language and read Chinese publications, the post-Suharto era signifies an end to 'darkness' and the beginning of light.¹² President Abdurrahman Wahid's lifting of the official ban on Chinese printed matter on 21 February 2001 was hailed by *The International Chinese News-weekly* (*Yazhou Zhoukan*) as a 'joyous moment for the second springtime' of Chinese culture.¹³

The Indonesian-language Chinese press: a humble start

It can be seen from Table 4.1 that most of the Chinese press in post-Suharto Indonesia was published in Chinese language. There were only five Indonesian-language Chinese publications that emerged in post-1998 Jakarta: *Suar 168*, *SIMPATIK*, *Sinergi Bangsa*, *Sinar Glodok* and *Suara Baru*. None of them was a daily newspaper. Nevertheless, most of them have ceased publication after a few years except for *Sinergi Indonesia* (under a new name and management) and *Sinar Glodok*, which still existed in 2004.

Some of the reasons for the short lifespan of the Indonesian-language Chinese press are related to the nature, content and coverage of these publications. For instance, the tabloid *Suar 168* was predominantly concerned with interpreting Chinese culture in the context of Indonesian society and tended to avoid political discussions (Pandiangan 2003: 416). Pandiangan noted that this kind of focus 'is a post-1998 trend that taps into a widespread nostalgia in the Chinese community for an open discussion of their culture, which had been virtually taboo for so long' (2003: 416). I argued elsewhere that the obsession with reviving Chinese culture and indulging in nostalgia would not satisfy the demand of the younger readers who are more interested in contemporary political and social issues (Hoon 2004a: 14).

However, not all of the Indonesian-language Chinese press focused on Chinese culture. In fact, *SIMPATIK*, *Suara Baru* and *Sinergi Bangsa* (changed to *Sinergi Indonesia* in 2003) were all more interested in non-cultural matters such as politics, social issues and economics (Pandiangan 2003: 416). These magazines focused on the eradication of discrimination and upholding justice in the community. They also attempted to reconstruct Chinese-Indonesian identity in this nation, especially after the May 1998 anti-Chinese riots. During the riots, Chinese-owned shops and businesses were looted and Chinese women were reportedly raped in Jakarta and other cities of Indonesia.

SIMPATIK was a monthly bulletin published by the Jakarta-based Chinese-Indonesian Youth Solidarity for Justice movement (*SIMPATIK*), an organization that was set up after the riots in May 1998 (Pandiangan 2003: 416–18). This organization was very active after the riots in exposing the injustice and discrimination that had been experienced by the Chinese in Indonesia. However, as time passed and the riots slowly became an event of the past, this organization began to lose its zeal and became

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inactive. Thus, its bulletin also disappeared. *Suara Baru* was also a monthly magazine published by a Chinese-Indonesian organization in Jakarta – INTI (Perhimpunan Tionghoa Indonesia or The Association of Chinese-Indonesians), with the same mission as SIMPATIK. However, some sponsors of *Suara Baru* decided to cut back financial support for the magazine because they thought that a magazine that focused on politics was too sensitive and dangerous.¹⁴ This shows that, although *Reformasi* and democratization have been taking place in Indonesia, some Chinese (especially the older generation) still tend to avoid politics due to the trauma they experienced in the persecution of 1965 and the anti-Chinese violence of 1998.

*Idealist press struggling to survive in a commercial world:
Sinergi Indonesia*

After *SIMPATIK* and *Suara Baru* came to a halt, *Sinergi Indonesia* became the only Indonesian-language Chinese press in Indonesia to focus on political and social issues, especially those related to the Chinese minority. *Sinergi Indonesia* is a monthly magazine published by the Indonesia Sinergy Research Institute (Lembaga Kajian Sinergi Indonesia) headed by a former member of *Baperki* – a left-wing Chinese organization during Sukarno's era. He argues that the Chinese-language press that has re-emerged has been too obsessed with the euphoria of the lifting of the ban on Chinese language and culture, and has overlooked the importance of finding a solution to 'The Chinese Problem'. The main objectives of *Sinergi Indonesia* are to educate Chinese-Indonesians about politics, since they have been separated from the political world for more than three decades. They aim to 'straighten up' (*meluruskan*) the misperceptions and prejudices about Chinese-Indonesians held by Indonesian society; and to create a new approach to accommodate or synergize Chinese-Indonesians beyond the assimilation and integration approaches (*Sinergi Indonesia*, March 2003 and Interview, 2 June 2004).

To achieve its objectives, *Sinergi Indonesia* focuses on Indonesian politics and history and the discrimination that Chinese-Indonesians continue to experience. It discusses and constructs discourses on how Chinese people should live and be accepted as an integral part of Indonesian society. It also covers many issues that were taboo during the Suharto era, such as the G30S, or September 30 Movement, in 1965. This is not surprising since the editors of this press belong to an older generation and are inclined to indulge in nostalgia for the past. In order to fulfil its 'cultural mission' of reminding readers of their Chinese roots, *Sinergi Indonesia* also publishes articles on *Feng Shui*, *Sam Kok* (*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), Chinese medicine and Chinese traditions. However, these features, to my mind, do not add much attraction to the magazine because it is doubtful that many young people would be interested in these articles.

The chief editor of *Sinergi Indonesia* acknowledges that young readers are not yet interested in this magazine (Interview, 2 June 2004). The

Table 4.1 Chinese press that circulated in Jakarta after 1998

Name of publication (Chinese, Indonesian, English, if any)	Type of publication	Starting date of publication	Price (Rupiah)	Language used	Still existed in 2004?
<i>Yindunxiya Ribao</i> <i>Harian Indonesia</i> <i>Indonesian Daily</i>	Daily	12/09/1966	1,300	Used to be in Chinese and Indonesian; now all in Chinese	Yes
<i>Yinni yu Dongxie</i> <i>Indonesia and ASEAN</i>	Monthly magazine	1990 (in Hong Kong)	—	Chinese	Changed name to <i>Xinyindong</i>
<i>Suar 168</i>	Weekly tabloid	October 1998	—	Indonesian	No
<i>Sinergi Bangsa</i>	Monthly magazine	November 1998	—	Indonesian	Changed management (see text below)
<i>Simpatik</i>	Bulletin	January 1999	—	Indonesian	No
<i>Yinhua Zhisheng</i> <i>Voice of Indonesian Chinese Magazine</i>	Monthly magazine	July 1999	7, 500	Chinese	Yes
<i>Huawen Youbao</i> <i>Mandarin Pos</i>	Tabloid	January 2000	—	Indonesian and Chinese	No
<i>Xin Sheng Ribao</i> <i>Harian Hidup Baru</i> <i>New Life Daily</i>	Daily	18 February 2000	1,500	Chinese	No (closed in July 2002)
<i>Suara Baru</i>	Monthly magazine	February 2000	—	Indonesian	No
<i>He Ping Ribao</i> <i>Harian Perdamaian</i> <i>Peaceful Daily</i>	Daily	March 2000	—	Chinese	No (closed end 2002)
<i>Zhinan Ribao</i> <i>Compass Daily</i>	Online newspaper	9 September 2000	—	Chinese	No

<i>Qiandao Ribao</i>	Daily	10 October 2000	1,500	Chinese	Yes
<i>Harian Nusanlara</i>					
<i>Archipelago Daily</i>					
<i>Cao Pu Zhi Guang</i>	Twice-weekly newspaper	–	1,500	Indonesian	Yes
<i>Sinar Glodok</i>					
<i>Light of Glodok</i>					
<i>Guo Ji Ribao</i>	Daily	1 April 2001	2,500	Chinese	Yes
<i>International Daily</i>					
<i>Shijie Ribao</i>	Daily	8 June 2001	2,500	Chinese	Yes
<i>Universal Daily</i>					
<i>Yindunxiya Shangbao</i>					
<i>Bisnis Indonesia</i>	Daily	–	2,500	Chinese	Yes
<i>Business Indonesia</i>	Monthly magazine	July 2002	6,000	Chinese	Yes
<i>Hu Sheng</i>					
<i>Media Aspirasi</i>					
<i>Media Aspirations</i>					
<i>Sinergi Indonesia</i>	Monthly magazine	March 2003	10,000	Indonesian	Yes
<i>(previously Sinergi Bangsa)</i>					
<i>Xin Yindong</i>	Fortnightly	Changed name	7,500	Chinese	Yes
<i>(previously Yinni yu</i>					
<i>Dongxie, Indonesia and</i>	magazine	in 2004			
<i>ASEAN)</i>					
<i>Shoudu Zhoukan</i>					
<i>Mingguan Ibukota</i>					
<i>Capital Weekly</i>	Weekly tabloid	May 2004	3,000	Chinese	Yes
<i>Tempo Interactive</i>	Online newspaper	2004	–	Chinese	Yes

Sources: Some of the information in the table is adapted from Pandiangan (2004: 414-15). The rest is from my own collection of Chinese newspapers and magazines, as well as from interviews that I have conducted with the management of some Chinese newspapers.

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discrepancy between the media practitioners who mainly belong to an older generation and the potential younger generation of readers reflects a 'generation gap' dilemma faced by most of the post-Suharto Chinese press.

Self-essentialism and the perpetuation of stereotypes: Sinar Glodok

Sinar Glodok is a bi-weekly newspaper that is circulated in Glodok – the oldest 'Chinatown' in Jakarta. Consisting of 12 pages, and covering mainly business news and advertisements, this newspaper is obviously commercially motivated. It reports on the business activities around the Glodok area and other major Chinese business districts such as Mangga Dua and Kelapa Gading. The commercial news includes news about the latest models and price lists of mobile phones and other technology products, new restaurants, property, the price of gold and foreign exchange rates.

This newspaper taps into and perpetuates the popular but unfavourable stereotype in Indonesia that the Chinese are 'economic animals' and 'apolitical'. Through its contents, we witness the production and circulation of the dehumanizing stereotype of the Chinese. This can be seen not only in the newspaper's business focus but also in its representations of 'Chineseness'. For example, the column 'apa siapa' (what and who) contains stories of successful Chinese figures, all of whom 'coincidentally' have a profession in business. It also publishes cartoons of Chinese people who are (re)presented as traders, wearing traditional Qing Dynasty Chinese costumes, with slanting eyes, pigtailed and round caps. In this way, *Sinar Glodok* has differentiated itself from other mainstream Indonesian-language newspapers. I would argue that such stereotypes of Chinese occupational identity as 'all Chinese people are traders' has the dangerous potential to inflame anti-Chinese feelings.

Although *Sinar Glodok* is not published in Chinese, it contains many interesting cultural features that display the Chinese identity of this newspaper. In some instances these features make it look even more 'Chinese' than the Chinese-language press. According to Allen (2003: 392), 'the symbolism of the choice of Chinese identity... is highly significant. It is a theme that had lain dormant for more than 30 years, and the very fact of its revivification is important.' For instance, on the top left corner of the cover page of this newspaper is the date of the current issue. Below the normal Western calendar 19–22 February 2004, it also shows the 'Chinese' calendar 29 Cia Gwee-03 Ji Gwee, Imlek 2555 (lunar year 2555), Shio Monyet (Year of Monkey).¹⁵ This is interesting because none of the Chinese-language newspapers in Jakarta uses a 'Chinese' calendar for its date.

A cultural 'mission' or effort to resinicize Chinese-Indonesians to be more conscious of their cultural values and traditions is one of the main objectives of most of the Chinese presses that emerged in post-Suharto Indonesia (this point will be elaborated further in the next section). The short story mentioned above was about a successful Chinese businessman (his 'Chinese-

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ness' is suggested in his Chinese name). When his acquaintance asked him what his secret of success was, he answered with a Chinese proverb (that was also the title of the story) about a 'hard work' ethic. This story implied that people with Chinese values and work ethics would be more successful in doing business than those Indonesians who do not have these values.¹⁶ Similar to the cartoon section mentioned above, this story employed a metonym that essentialized the ethnic character of the Chinese: Chinese names stand for Chinese ethnicity and Chinese always (and only) enter into business as their occupation. In Allen's words, '[t]he reductionist nature of metonymy leads to the essentialism of Chineseness . . . and the perpetuation, rather than the deconstruction, of commonly held stereotypes' (2003: 395).

Another example of the effort of *Sinar Glodok* to resinicize its readers can be found in the column entitled 'Tekat Sayang' (Aixin man tianxia, or 'Love is everywhere'). This column publishes Chinese proverbs, words of wisdom and short stories sent by readers. It presents them in Chinese characters, followed by pinyin and Indonesian translations below. It seems as though the newspaper is trying to promote Chinese values to the Chinese-Indonesians who did not receive a Chinese education.¹⁷

An interesting feature of *Sinar Glodok* that illustrates the hybridized language used by Chinese-Indonesian people can be seen in its short story column, mentioned above. The short stories are written in Indonesian but Hokkien and Mandarin pinyin are also used. For instance, in the 19–22 February 2004 issue, Mandarin pinyin was used for the title of the story (which happened to be a Chinese proverb). Hokkien names (such as Ko A Heng) were used to indicate that the characters in the story were ethnic Chinese; and Chinese-Malay expressions such as 'Lu' and 'Gue' were used in the conversational dialogues. The hybrid mixture of Indonesian language, Hokkien and Chinese terms and Chinese-Malay expressions is common in daily conversation within the Chinese community in Indonesia.

Sinar Glodok acknowledges the lived reality of the hybrid condition of Chinese-Indonesians by showing the mixed use of language in daily conversation. However, the uncritical use of metonymy and stereotypes suggest an essentialized character of 'Chineseness' and serve 'to perpetuate, rather than challenge' the 'fixedness' of ethnic identity (Allen 2003: 399). By holding on to an essentialist concept of ethnicity, *Sinar Glodok* reinforces the image of Chinese-Indonesians as 'once a Chinese, always a Chinese', suggesting that the hybridization and localization of Chinese-Indonesians never happened.

The need for an Indonesian-language Chinese press: a new Sin Po, perhaps?

There is no debate over whether an Indonesian-language Chinese press is needed in Indonesia within the Chinese community. The Chinese community

sees the urgent need to set up Chinese media in the Indonesian language that can represent the aspirations and voices of Chinese-Indonesians (Li, Z. H. 2004: 332–4; *Sinergi Indonesia*, December 2003: 3–6). However, one might wonder why Chinese-Indonesians need their own press rather than remaining with and reading the mainstream Indonesian press.

Articles published by the Centre for Information, Education and Publication in Sumatra (Kippas or Kajian Informasi, Pendidikan, dan Penerbitan Sumatera) in 2002 indicate that the mainstream Indonesian press has always perceived the ethnic Chinese as a homogeneous group and ‘Chineseness’ as fixed and unchanging (Anto 2002; Irene 2002; Prasetyo 2002). The authors studied four newspapers published in Medan and noted that these had reproduced and perpetuated three negative stereotypes of the Chinese: they are disloyal, exclusive and economic animals. They demonstrated that these publications had always deliberately ethnicized cases when Chinese people had committed a crime. In such cases, either their original Chinese names were published or the title *WNI keturunan* (Indonesian citizens of foreign descent, a tag commonly used to refer to the Chinese) was used below their names to identify their Chinese ethnicity. On the other hand, the press never identified the ethnicity of Chinese-Indonesians like Susy Susanti and Kwik Gian Gie, who have made major positive contributions to the nation.¹⁸

These demonizing representations of the ethnic Chinese in the mainstream press justify the cause for an Indonesian-language Chinese press that can serve as a mouthpiece of the Chinese to ‘straighten up’ the (mis)perceptions in the mainstream society and function as a communicative tool within the Chinese community. However, as discussed above, *Sinergi Indonesia* has failed to be the ideal press that the Chinese are looking for because it is too political, too backward-looking and too irresponsible to the needs of the contemporary market. On the other hand, *Sinar Glodok* is merely a commercial press. It is the product of 32 years of internalizing the stereotypes and essentialist views that have been held by the mainstream society. It does not challenge them. If these two Indonesian-language Chinese presses cannot represent Chinese aspirations, what kind of press do Chinese-Indonesians want?

Some Chinese community leaders have suggested establishing a new *Sin Po* (Li, Z. H. 2004: 335–7). *Sin Po* was closed down in 1965 but its spirit and influence have never been forgotten by Chinese-Indonesians of that generation. The term ‘new’ indicates the identities of Chinese-Indonesians who have become transformed since the time when *Sin Po* was first established. Benny Setiono, the Chairman of INTI, Jakarta, stated that the new *Sin Po* should adopt an Indonesian orientation or a *luodi shenggen* approach (fallen leaves, rooted locally), in contrast to the *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) stance. It should be a press that goes hand in hand with the mainstream society, and should be loyal and constructive to Indonesia, and, at the same time, convey the voice, information and activities of the Chinese community (Li, Z. H. 2004: 336).

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I am tempted to ask: why is *Sin Po* still lingering in the post-Suharto era? Is it because it has become a legend or is it because the people who suggested it mostly still indulge in nostalgia for the splendid days of *Sin Po*? Whatever the reason, it is clear that Chinese-Indonesians are longing for an influential, powerful and daring press like *Sin Po*. However, Pandian-gan (2003: 418–19) has reminded us that the ‘Chinese press can no longer simply rely on idealism and sentiment . . . what the Chinese community needs is alternative, intelligent reading matter that can contribute to the diversity of this nation’. This is certainly a challenge for the new *Sin Po* if it is successfully revived.

The Chinese-language press: a display of multiculturalism

As mentioned above, the ‘new’ space opened for the Chinese press in the post-Suharto era is dominated by Chinese-language publications. Table 4.1 shows that there were around ten Chinese-language publications, and only two Indonesian-language Chinese publications, circulating in Jakarta in 2004. Nevertheless, this *baihua qifang* (hundred flowers bloom) phenomenon of the Chinese-language press should be read within the context of a shift in ethnic policy in post-Suharto Indonesia. Elsewhere I have argued that:

[t]he downfall of Suharto has given rise to an identity politics across the whole of Indonesian society. Multiculturalism as a policy has been contemplated and endorsed by Indonesia’s new power holders as a preferred policy for rebuilding the nation, consistent with Indonesia’s national motto – ‘Unity in Diversity’.

(Hoon 2004b: 19; Suryadinata 2004a)

Multiculturalism as a policy tends to (over)emphasize the representation of ‘difference’ and assume all members of an ethnic group are equally committed to that culture. As Nira Yuval-Davis observes:

They [multicultural policy makers] tend to construct the members of minority collectivities as basically homogeneous, speaking with a unified cultural or racial voice. These voices are constructed so as to make them as distinct as possible from the majority culture, so as to make them ‘different’. Thus, within multiculturalism, the more traditional and distanced from the majority culture the voice of the ‘community representatives’ is, the more ‘authentic’ it would be perceived to be within such construction.

(1997: 200)

This new multicultural environment has provided an ideal breeding ground in which the Chinese-language press can proliferate. The publication of the Chinese-language press in Indonesia is strongly encouraged by the

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government because it demonstrates the new policy makers' determination in implementing *Reformasi* and abandoning the old assimilationist ideology, whether this is the case in reality or not. To the Chinese-Indonesians, the re-emergence of Chinese-language publications has important symbolic meanings, notwithstanding the fact that most of them no longer read or speak Chinese. It signifies victory over the 'dark forces' of Suharto's regime and the beginning of a bright future for the Chinese in Indonesia. Even though familiarity or capability with Chinese language no longer reflects the 'Chineseness' of most Chinese-Indonesians, the revival of Chinese-language publications is still perceived as an acknowledgement of their culture and identity. Werbner asserts that this 'strategic essentializing of self-representation' (1997: 248) is a 'rhetorical performance in which an imagined community is invoked' (1997: 230) and can be 'culturally empowering' (1997: 248).

Negotiating multiple identities

As I have argued in the earlier parts of this chapter, the Chinese in Indonesia have never been a unified and homogeneous group. The Chinese press reflects the different identities of the Chinese in Indonesia at different times. The post-Suharto Chinese-language press is notably different in its identities compared to those before and during Sukarno's Old Order. The most apparent difference is that the press no longer represents the *huaqiao* perspective and has adopted an Indonesian identity. However, this does not render this identity singular. Following the influence of globalization and transnational media links, the Chinese-language press in post-Suharto Indonesia is constantly negotiating between the local and the global; and striving to be both Indonesian and Chinese at the same time.

Among the ten Chinese publications, there are five daily newspapers, three monthly magazines, one weekly tabloid and one online newspaper. The two largest daily newspapers are *The International Daily* (*Guoji Ribao*), which circulates around 30,000 copies a day, and *The Universal Daily* (*Shijie Ribao*), which circulates around 10,000 copies a day. It is not uncommon to hear readers remarking that *The International Daily* is a pro-China newspaper, while *The Universal Daily* is pro-Taiwan. This can be understood from the place of origin of these two newspapers. Both of these newspapers originated overseas: the former from Los Angeles (although locally owned in Indonesia) and the latter from Taiwan. Although they report Indonesian news from their offices in Jakarta, most of their international news is delivered by their respective head offices. Hence, it could be expected that their ideology is very much influenced by, if not reflective of, their head offices. *The International Daily* includes *Wen Wei Po* (*Wen Hui Bao* Southeast Asia Edition), a Hong Kong newspaper, and China's *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily* Overseas Edition) in its publication, making it the 'thickest' Chinese newspaper in Indonesia.

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Some older-generation Chinese-Indonesians still conceptualize the identity of today's Chinese press as a singular entity: it is either pro-China or pro-Taiwan.¹⁹ This is the case, perhaps, because they went through the period when overseas Chinese politics were basically polarized between the pro-China and pro-Taiwan camps. The reason for them assuming that there is continuity between the re-emerged Chinese press and the Chinese press of the 1950s is that they perceive the competition between *The International Daily* and *The Universal Daily* as resembling the heated rivalry between *Xin Bao* and *Tiansheng Ribao* in the 1950s. Their obsession with the past has blinded them from seeing the multiple identities of today's press. They also fail to see the shift in interest of most contemporary publications from ideological competition to commercial motivation. If anything, the competition between *The International Daily* and *The Universal Daily* is commercial rather than ideological. Unlike *Xin Bao* and *Tiansheng Ribao*, these two presses have never attacked each other's political stance.

In fact, *The International Daily* and *The Universal Daily* in Indonesia deny that they are politically orientated to China or Taiwan. The chief editor of *The International Daily* in Jakarta contends that:

The International Daily is pro-Indonesia. . . . Our objective is to help the Chinese-Indonesians to understand and know Indonesia better. Chinese-Indonesians should be united to love this country. The reason that we included *Wen Wei Pao* and *Renmin Ribao* is because there is demand in the United States for these newspapers since there are a great proportion of Chinese migrants in the States that came from China. So our head office collaborated with these two newspapers and gained approval to distribute them. . . . In Indonesia, there are many people who want to read news about Hong Kong and China because China's economy has become stronger. Hence, *mau tak mau* (whether we want it or not), we need to include them [in our newspaper]

(Interview, 12 July 2004; my translation)

It can be seen that the contemporary Chinese press can be multiple in its identities. *The International Daily* demonstrates that it is politically orientated to Indonesia, notwithstanding the heavy focus on China to cater for the rising demand of readers for news about the booming Chinese economy.

The Universal Daily proclaims that it is 'a newspaper that belongs to the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia' (see advertisement section of *The Universal Daily*). A senior reporter at *The Universal Daily* stated that:

we are Indonesians and we should be loyal to Indonesia but we are also ethnic Chinese, our ancestors came from China. We are truly Indonesian and truly Chinese (*wanquan de yinniren yeshi wanquan de huaren*) and we only have a kinship relation with China (*qingqi guanxi*).

(Interview, 11 May 2004; my translation)

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This shows that, even though a newspaper has a transnational origin, it can also adopt a local identity once it is committed to that locality and employing local people on its staff. The pro-China and pro-Taiwan dichotomy is also problematic for *The Universal Daily* because its Taiwan head office adopts an anti-Taiwan independence stance.²⁰ Does this thus render it a pro-China press? Or is the dichotomy too narrow to define the contemporary Chinese press in Indonesia?

A smaller Chinese newspaper that was established in Surabaya in 2000, *Qiandao Ribao* (*The Archipelago Daily*), sees itself as an ethnic newspaper in Indonesia. The director of this press, a 70-year-old Chinese in Surabaya, believes that the Chinese are one of the many *suku* (ethnic groups) in Indonesia. Like other *suku*, the Chinese should be entitled to the right to express and promote their own characteristics, language, traditions and customs. Among the aims of this Chinese-Indonesian-oriented newspaper is to keep and promote these aspects of Chinese culture, as well as improve harmony between ethnicities. Nevertheless, adopting a Chinese-Indonesian identity does not prevent this press from taking a stance on politics between China and Taiwan. This press is supportive of the 'one China policy', consistent with Indonesia's official stance (Interview, 18 May 2004). Hence, it can be seen that there is still a general 'obsession with China' in the local Chinese press. However, this should not be read simply as an assertion of primordialism and disloyalty to Indonesia, but as an expression of the multiple-rootedness and multiple identities of the older generation of Chinese-Indonesians. Indeed, the aspiration of the director of *The Archipelago Daily* for the younger generation of Chinese-Indonesians is that they can '*lizu bendi mianxiang shijie* (stand locally but face globally)' (Interview, 18 May 2004; my translation). This negotiation between global and local shows that flexible and multiple subjectivities are increasingly becoming a reality of life, and an insistence on the idea of singular identity is becoming more unrealistic.

Another interesting feature of the Chinese-language press is its tendency to imagine itself as being a part of the so-called Chinese diaspora. According to Ang:

with the increased possibilities of keeping in touch with the old homeland and with co-ethnics in other parts of the world through faster and cheaper jet transport, mass media and electronic telecommunications, . . . migrant groups are collectively more inclined to see themselves not as minorities within nation-states, but as members of global diasporas which span national boundaries.

(2001: 76)

This imagination of a global Chinese identity is illuminated in two aspects of coverage in the Chinese-language press: entertainment news and

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special reports on successful Chinese overseas. I have noted that all Chinese-language publications in Jakarta only publish entertainment news on 'Oriental' (read: China, Taiwan and Hong Kong) stars. The exception is *Harian Indonesia*, which does not publish much entertainment news. Some of them cover Hollywood gossip occasionally but none has reported entertainment news on Indonesian artists. This phenomenon points to the transnational identity of the Chinese-language press, facilitated by technology such as the Internet. Both *The International Daily* and *The Universal Daily* get their daily supply of entertainment news from their head offices via email. Other Chinese newspapers and magazines download and appropriate the latest 'Oriental' entertainment news from the Internet. The interesting question to be asked is why they prefer 'Oriental' entertainment news to Indonesian? Part of the reason is that 'Oriental' popular culture has gained huge popularity in Indonesia over the past few years, in part thanks to the official loosening of media control and the establishment of cable television in 1999. Another reason, according to a senior reporter at *The Universal Press*, is their shortage of staff in entertainment coverage (Interview, 23 July 2004). Most of the reporters in the Chinese-language press belong to an older generation that is 50 years old and above. It is understandable that this generation finds it challenging to follow contemporary news on Indonesian artists. However, this reason is hardly satisfactory: if the Chinese-language press can translate political news from Indonesian-language sources, they could arguably also translate entertainment news from these sources. Hence, it could be argued that their focus on 'Oriental' entertainment news is a desperate attempt to identify with the 'Oriental' popular culture 'centre', which is perceived to share the same 'root'.

Chinese-language newspapers and magazines have also been reporting regularly on stories of successful people of Chinese descent who live in America or other countries outside China. The 'news' magazine *New Indonesia and ASEAN* publishes these stories under its section on '*huaren dongtai*' (the situation of Chinese) and the tabloid *The Capital Weekly* publishes them under its '*huashe jingying*' (the heroes of Chinese society) section.²¹ These publications champion successful Chinese migrants as role models for Chinese-Indonesians. Their stories are meant to inspire the Chinese-Indonesians, who, the Chinese-language press believes, share the 'same' experience of being part of the 'diaspora'. This diasporic imagination assumes a (trans)nationalistic pride of belonging to the Chinese 'race', even though they are in different locations. The promotion of imagined relations with the diasporic Chinese community may be cherished by older-generation Chinese-Indonesians who were Chinese educated but it is doubtful that the younger non-Chinese-speaking generation identifies with this imagined community.

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After the fall of Suharto, many ethnic Chinese took advantage of the political liberalization to set up organizations to fight for the abolition of discriminatory laws, defend their rights and promote solidarity between ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, the trauma from the closure of all Chinese media and the arrest and persecution of staff in the Chinese press in 1965 has deterred some from venturing into political territory. The director of *The Archipelago Daily* admits that his newspaper has focused more on cultural issues than political discussion because he believes that Chinese-Indonesians are not very keen on politics (Interview, 18 May 2004).

Nevertheless, not all the Chinese-language presses lean towards *The Archipelago Daily's* view. Some of them are very enthusiastic about contributing to the new wave of political activism. They report political news about Indonesia, especially those related to the Chinese. For example, they publish news about discrimination, new official policies on the Chinese and Chinese political candidates in the 2004 general election. These elections have also provided an opportunity for the Chinese press to get involved in the political education of the Chinese community in Indonesia.²² For instance, *The International Daily* and *The Universal Daily* have sponsored seminars that were organized by Chinese organizations in Jakarta. However, this does not mean that the Chinese-language press is totally comfortable with the world of politics. Many Chinese publications are cautiously testing the water and practising the New Order style of self-censorship, in order to remain active but safe. Most Chinese-language newspapers limit themselves mainly to reporting news and eschew politics and political discourse in Indonesia. This is different from the strategies of both the pre-Suharto Chinese presses, which were more politically orientated, and quality mainstream, contemporary Indonesian newspapers (such as *Kompas*). Besides paranoia, the Chinese-language press also does not have the expertise to produce in-depth political commentary or analysis. Due to the decades-long ban on Chinese education in Indonesia, it is understandable that most editors and reporters of Chinese-language newspapers are older-generation Chinese.²³ Many Chinese-language publications are facing the difficulty of acquiring younger staff who are competent in Chinese language.²⁴ Even if they are competent, it remains doubtful whether these employees would have an adequate knowledge of journalism.

Chinese-language magazines have been more active in publishing articles and commentaries on politics than Chinese-language newspapers. There are at least three Chinese-language magazines in Jakarta that give significant weight to politics. They are *Xin Yindong* (*The New Indonesia and ASEAN*, previously *Yinni yu Dongxie* or *Indonesia and ASEAN*), *Hu Sheng* (*Media Aspirations*) and *Yinhua Zhisheng* (*The Voice of Indonesian Chinese Magazine*). *The New Indonesia and ASEAN* is the most long-lived magazine of the three. It was not registered in Indonesia but in Hong Kong

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in 1990 due to the prohibition of Chinese publications in Indonesia. It started out as a small publication (then called *The Indonesia and Asean*) that published news of Indonesia's politics and economy. This news was in high demand by Chinese-Indonesian business people in Hong Kong and by *guiqiao* (Chinese-Indonesians who returned to China in the 1950s and 1960s and later moved to Hong Kong), because many of them still had family and relatives in Indonesia. Copies of this magazine were later sneaked into Indonesia illegally for circulation and distribution. Bookstores selling this magazine hid them behind other magazines on the racks or kept them under the counter. Readers threw the magazine away after they read it because Chinese characters were banned by the New Order government (Interview, 5 May 2004).

After the fall of Suharto, *The Indonesia and ASEAN* increased its discussions of politics and the legal rights of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. It also provided a space for readers to contribute articles and commentaries on politics. This 'space' was often used by readers to initiate discussions about certain Chinese community leaders or organizations, which sometimes ended up in a series of personal attacks and provocative debates. These discussions eventually offended some Chinese figures and forced this magazine to change its management in late 2003. After a management reshuffle, the magazine retained its name but gave its contents a facelift. It was transformed into a leisure and lifestyle magazine covering issues such as beauty, sex, health, sports and entertainment. However, this facelift did not 'sell' as expected by the new management, in a predominantly aging readership market. The subscribers did not find the issues attractive and demanded the return of the old format (Interview, 5 July 2004). The new format of the magazine ceased after the publication of only three issues. The old management re-established the magazine in March 2004 under a new name, *Xin Yindong*, which means *The New Indonesia and ASEAN*. *Xin Yindong* proudly proclaimed its motto on its front cover: 'For the continuation of the original taste of *Yinni yu Dongxie*, [we] stand firmly in an Indonesian perspective and bravely speak of those that others dare not speak of.' Living up to its motto, it once again publishes readers' articles that provoke debates. The diverse opinions and internal politics within the Chinese community again reflect its heterogeneity.

The 'coming out' of the closet of political avoidance can also be seen in two magazines that are published by alumni groups. Formerly these were known to have been more concerned about cultural rather than political matters. *Media Aspirations* is published by alumni from former (pre-1966) Chinese schools in Jakarta while *The Voice of Indonesian Chinese* is published by alumni who were educated in Taiwan. *Media Aspirations* devoted many issues in 2004 to the general election. *The Voice of Indonesian Chinese*, on the other hand, focuses more on the political developments between China and Taiwan. Most of the political commentaries and articles in *Media Aspirations* are translated from mainstream Indonesian media. This

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shows that, despite the lack of experience and knowledge about political commentary, this magazine is still committed to carrying out the political education of its readers – presumably mostly alumni from pre-1966 Chinese schools. It should be mentioned that translating articles from Indonesian to Chinese is not an uncommon practice in the Chinese-language press. However, the inaccuracy in translations and the lack of proper references or acknowledgement of sources show that the Chinese press is still far from being professional.

Even though the Chinese-language press has become active in discussing political issues, it is doubtful that this political activism has much potential for empowering Chinese-Indonesians. The main reason is that it does not provide much space for discourse construction other than reporting or translating political commentaries from the mainstream Indonesian press. Second, the market for the Chinese-language press is insignificant. Only the older generation has the language ability to read such media. This language barrier has also limited the ability of the Chinese-language press to reach mainstream society and the Indonesian government. Therefore, the discussions, debates and discourses that have been stimulated in these media are circulated only within a very limited segment of the Chinese community.

Cultural 'mission' and resinicization

Viewing itself as one of the gatekeepers of Chinese culture, the post-Suharto Chinese-language press values the task of reviving Chinese education and supporting Chinese organizations. It sees these as its main responsibilities. Most of the Chinese-language press in Indonesia has an objective of reviving and promoting Chinese-language and culture, and preventing it from vanishing in Indonesia. The management of these publications, presumably all older-generation Chinese, feel apologetic about the discontinuation (*duan cheng*) of Chinese language among the younger generation and think that it is their responsibility to resinicize the generation that has 'lost' its Chinese identity. A chief editor of a Chinese-language publication put this bluntly:

Chinese culture has a fine history of 5,000 years. Assimilated [Indonesianized] Chinese have lost this noble culture. They are notably [unChinese] in their personality, including their morals. For instance, they are lazy, laid back, like to enjoy life [without thinking about the future], do not respect their elders and do not love their teachers. People with Chinese culture are more hardworking, diligent and thrifty.²⁵ . . . We need to promote Confucian moral values to these people. Owing to the rise of China, people are more attracted to learn Chinese because there is now economic motivation.

(Interview, 12 July 2004; my translation)

This view of the young generation has motivated the Chinese-language press to be determined to resinicize them. They see the resinicization project as a

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cultural 'mission'. This cultural 'mission' has promoted a fraternity of comrades rather than rivalries between some Chinese-language publications.²⁶ The 'missionary' mentality is also often used as the reason for Chinese-language publications to carry on, despite the fact that many of them are making a loss.

The Chinese-language press perceives the rise of China's economy as a major force that has contributed to achieving the press's cultural 'mission'. A director of a Chinese-language publication stated:

Chinese language has become a world trend because of the growing Chinese economy. . . . Young Chinese-Indonesians learn Mandarin for the economic prospects. The search for roots will come later – after they learn about Chinese culture.

(Interview, 18 May 2004)

Chinese language is often seen as equivalent to Chinese culture. Many Chinese-Indonesians of the older generation believe that, by learning the language, the younger generation will be influenced by the virtues of Chinese culture and Confucian values, and thus be resinicized as 'real' Chinese.

Efforts to revive 'lost' Chinese culture take different forms in the Chinese-language press. Newspapers and magazines publish Chinese literature, poems, classical stories, calligraphy, students' compositions, and information about travel in China and about learning Mandarin in their supplementary sections. It can be said that this effort might only be 'personally satisfying' for the older generation, as young Chinese-Indonesians are not able to read this sophisticated literature. Nevertheless, the supplementary section has become a very important 'space' in which older-generation poets and writers can 'socialize'. It is not uncommon to see these people contributing poems and calligraphy in classical Mandarin to pay each other a compliment. Some of their poems and articles reflect their continuous feeling of ambivalence at living in Indonesia, especially the literature written by those affected by the May 1998 riots.

Sometimes the promotion of Chinese language and culture turns out to be an imposition of 'Chineseness' by those who see themselves as more 'authentic' than those who have lost most of their Chinese culture. This is illustrated in a debate on the term *mu yu* (mother tongue) and *guo yu* (national language) that took place in *Media Aspirations*.²⁷ In a particular issue, a contributor defined 'ethnicity' as represented by one's blood and race. Hence, he argued that Mandarin should be the 'mother tongue' of all Chinese who have Chinese blood. He acknowledged that many Chinese-Indonesians have lost their ability to speak their 'mother tongue', but argued that this is only a 'short-term' phenomenon, created by the New Order government. Following on from that, he urged the Chinese community to take up the responsibility of promoting Chinese language. He also asserted that, with the new policy of multiculturalism, Mandarin should be given the same rights

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as other ethnic languages in Indonesia such as Javanese and Sundanese. He accepted Bahasa Indonesia as the national language of Chinese-Indonesians but not as their first language, which, he reiterated, is Mandarin (*Media Aspirations* 2004, Issue 59, pp. 13–15).

The above argument attempted to define ‘mother tongue’ unequivocally on the basis of an essentialist concept of ethnicity that stresses ‘once a Chinese, always a Chinese’ and abusively uses multiculturalism to justify its claim for ethnic solidarity and rights. The hegemonic identification of Chinese ‘race’ and Chinese language unrealistically assumed that Chinese-Indonesian identity is fixed and unchanging and denied the day-to-day hybridization and transformation of their identity through interaction with local cultures.²⁸

Conclusion

Looking at the Chinese press in post-Suharto Indonesia, we see both change and continuity. Nostalgia for the past is a feature of the post-Suharto Chinese press. Even though the contemporary Chinese press is not as politically orientated as the pre-1966 Chinese press, it strongly perceives the promotion of Chinese culture and resinicization of Chinese-Indonesians as its primary objective. It is apparent that the Indonesian-language and Chinese-language Chinese presses are equally serious in their commitment to the so-called cultural ‘mission’. The older generation’s insistence on imposing their ‘Chineseness’ on the younger generation very much reflects their concept of identity. Many older-generation Chinese-Indonesians are apologetic about the younger generation who no longer speak Chinese. They tend to equate Chinese values with the ability to speak Chinese languages and thus perceive people who do not speak Chinese as deprived of Chinese values.

However, Nonini and Ong remind us that:

‘Chineseness’ is no longer . . . a property or essence of a person calculated by that person’s having more or fewer ‘Chinese values’ or norms, but instead can be understood only in terms of the multiplicity of ways in which ‘being Chinese’ is an inscribed relation of persons and groups to forces and processes associated with global capitalism and its modernities.

(1997: 3–4)

This ‘multiplicity’ of ‘Chineseness’ has become a reality of Chinese-Indonesians’ lives in their day-to-day negotiation with the non-Chinese majority and the forces of globalization. Unfortunately, the multiple and hybrid identities of Chinese-Indonesians are not acknowledged by some of the post-Suharto Chinese presses, which (re)presented and continue to (re)present ‘Chineseness’ in essentialist terms as argued in this chapter. They tend to see the rise of China as a perfect opportunity for them to attract

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young people to identify with their cultural roots – the identity that they were born with – whether this incentive is working or not. In this way, the older generations deploy an essentialist position of being Chinese through an attempt to reconnect with China.

This chapter has clearly demonstrated the heterogeneity and diversity of the Chinese press in post-Suharto Indonesia. In fact, as the Chinese press is continuously negotiating between the global and the local, politics and culture, and Chinese and Indonesian identities, so are the Chinese-Indonesians themselves. Faced with the diverse information (re)presented in the press, it can be said that the dilemma of Chinese-Indonesian readers would resonate with that of Sun's, that is, it 'is not whether I can continue to be Chinese. . .; it is how Chinese or what kind of Chinese I want to be' (see Introduction in this volume).

Notes

- 1 This research was undertaken as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Western Australia (UWA). The material from this chapter was gathered during my field research in Jakarta in 2004, under the auspices of the Indonesia Institute of Sciences (LIPI), the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, an Australian Postgraduate Award, a Dean's Postgraduate Travel Award from UWA and Postgraduate Fieldwork Funds from the School of Social and Cultural Studies at UWA.
- The author would like to express appreciation to Dr Lyn Parker at UWA and Ms January Lim at the University of Alberta for their generous comments and advice on my earlier draft. Special thanks to Wanning Sun for her critical reading and relentless effort in editing my chapter.
- 2 For a detailed study of the Chinese terms *huaqiao* and *huaren*, see Wang (1976a: 118–27; 1976b: 249–60).
- 3 The identification of the *totok-peranakan* distinction based on birthplace and race (pure or mixed blood) is noted in Somers (1964) and Williams (1960).
- 4 Amyot (1972) also notes that the '*peranakan* society distinguishes itself from Indonesian society by what it has retained of Chinese culture. This retention is due partly to the character of Chinese culture itself that is hardy and singularly persistent even under the most adverse conditions' (p. 73). Williams (1960) notes that the Chinese felt themselves culturally superior to other peoples. 'The term "culturalism" has come into limited use to describe the attitude of the Chinese in their pre-nationalist relationship with foreigners' (p. 15). Williams claims that this attitude made them extremely reluctant to accept or to acknowledge having accepted innovations from abroad. Thus, the Chinese belief in the supremacy of their civilization was possibly the chief barrier to social communication with Indonesians.
- 5 The Chinese-Malay (*Bahasa Melayu Tionghoa*) language they speak is also known as Batavian Malay. This language is a combination of bazaar Malay and the *Hokkien* dialect, and was later enriched by borrowings from Dutch and other Western languages. See Oetomo (1988) and Suryadinata (1981: xiv).
- 6 The stance against using the *totok* and *peranakan* distinction is contrary to Suryadinata's (2004a) paper on ethnic Chinese literature in Indonesia, where he still uses this dichotomy to describe post-Suharto Chinese-Indonesian literature. Suryadinata's insistence on using the traditional binary implies an assumption of identity as static, inflexible, singular, essentialist and unchanging.

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Suryadinata's simplistic understanding of identity has undermined the complexity of Chinese identity in contemporary Indonesia. The dichotomy between *totok* and *peranakan* needs to be deconstructed rather than perpetuated.

- 7 *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* was established to reform the 'corrupt' Chinese customs practised by the *peranakan*, to promote Confucianism and to provide Chinese education with a modern curriculum (see Kwee 1969).
- 8 The leftist newspapers accused the Guomindang of being the running dog of the United States and blamed them for almost giving China away to the imperialists. Meanwhile, the rightist newspapers accused the Communist Party of China of trying to sell China to the USSR and propagated support for Chiang Kai Shek to invade mainland China (Li, Z. H. 2003: 19).
- 9 For instance, *Zhengzhi Xuanyan Bao* (*Harian Manipol*), which was established in Medan in 1961, only lasted for five months. Another daily that appeared in Surabaya, called *Hong Bai Bao*, was also banned in 1962 (see Suryadinata 1978: 139–40).
- 10 According to Krishna Sen and David Hill (2000: 52), '[d]uring the early years of independence the press was dubbed by President Sukarno a "tool of the Revolution", responsible for energising and mobilising public opinion. Political parties became sponsors of the medium'. This phenomenon could also be seen in *Warta Bakti*, which propagated Sukarno's political thoughts and supported the integration ethnic policy of Baperki (Indonesian Citizens Consultative Body) – a powerful left-wing Chinese social-political organization formed in 1954 and aimed at protecting Chinese who were Indonesian citizens (see Li, Z. H. 2003: 45–6).
- 11 Suryadinata (2004c: vii) refers to Chinese organizations, Chinese schools and Chinese media as the 'three pillars' of Chinese culture. Chinese-Indonesian writers tend to refer to these as the 'three treasures' (*san bao*) of Chineseness.
- 12 Zhuo Hui Li (2003: 323) described the experience of the Chinese press in the post-Suharto era as being able to 'see clear sky again' (*cong jian tian ri*). Another writer described it as being able to 'see light again' (*cong jian guang ming*) (see Xing 2004: 14).
- 13 The front page of *The International Chinese Newsweekly* (*Yazhou Zhoukan*) is entitled 'Lifting the ban on Chinese Culture in Indonesia: Jakarta welcomes the second springtime for Chinese'. See *The International Chinese Newsweekly* (*Yazhou Zhoukan*) (12–18 March 2001, pp. 28–31).
- 14 This information was given to me in an interview with a Chinese-Indonesian media observer and activist in Jakarta.
- 15 The term 'Chinese' is in quotation marks because the lunar calendar that is published in *Sinar Glodok* is more accurately described as a 'Chinese-Indonesian' calendar because it represents a unique Chinese-Indonesian culture. First, the language the calendar uses is Hokkien rather than Mandarin. Second, the year 2555 is based on Confucius' birthday rather than the real lunar year. To the best of the author's knowledge, no Chinese calendar uses Confucius' birth year as the first lunar year.
- 16 This construction of 'Chineseness' in popular stereotypes (such as hardworking and successful in business) implicitly demonized and essentialized the indigenous Indonesians or *pribumi* as 'lazy natives'.
- 17 I gathered from my interviews with some older-generation, Chinese-educated Chinese-Indonesians that they think that later generations, who did not have a chance to receive a Chinese education, do not have Chinese values and should be resinicized. They tend to equate Chinese education with Chinese values. That means people who cannot speak Chinese are deprived of Chinese values.
- 18 Susy Susanti is a national badminton player who represented Indonesia and won a gold medal in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. Kwik Gian Gie is an

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economist and currently the head of BAPPENAS (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional or the National Development Planning Body) in Indonesia.

- 19 For instance, the magazine *Yinni yu Dongxie* (*Indonesia and ASEAN*) was being boycotted and forced to change management in 2003 because it was thought to be pro-Taiwan. One of the reasons for this condemnation was that it once reported news about the Falungung movement in Indonesia, which angered the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta. Another reason was that the founder of this magazine was educated in Taiwan. Hence, he assumed it better to be pro-Taiwan, even though he claimed that he had never supported Taiwan's independence from China. He referred to his educational background as the 'original sin' (*yuan zui*), a stigma that cannot be erased (Interview, 5 July 2004).
- 20 Another Chinese magazine, *Yinhua Zhisheng* (*The Voice of the Indonesian Chinese Magazine*), has also been perceived by the Chinese community in Jakarta as a pro-Taiwan magazine simply because it was established by Chinese-Indonesian alumni who were educated in Taiwan and focuses on news and political commentaries on Taiwan and China-Taiwan relations. However, the chief editor stressed that this magazine is anti-Taiwan's independence. It covers Taiwan and China news because of the demand of its readers. Its readership is made up of Taiwanese business people and Chinese-Indonesians who are concerned about China-Taiwan relations. This further challenges the simplistic pro-China or pro-Taiwan dichotomy that has been a popular identity marker in the Chinese-speaking community in Indonesia.
- 21 *The New Indonesia and ASEAN* (Issue 3) published a story about a Chinese-American who became the first Asian chancellor of a state university in America. In Issue 5, it published the story of Ryan Cheung, an American of Chinese descent who obtained his undergraduate degree at the age of 16 and became one of the youngest graduates in Los Angeles. Issue 6 of the same magazine reported the story of Kevin Yang, another American of Chinese descent who achieved the highest score in the Math Plus competition in the whole of the United States. The tabloid *The Capital Weekly* dedicates its first two pages to reports on '*huashe jingying*'. For instance, the thirteenth edition of this tabloid reported the story of Kuang Jieling, a fourth-generation Chinese-American who entered politics and struggled for the rights of ethnic minorities.
- 22 Political education is perceived to be much needed by the older-generation Chinese-speaking community who avoided politics for more than three decades. To promote political awareness, the chief editor of *The International Daily*, Li Zhuo Hui, has published three books in Chinese on Indonesian politics and the history of Chinese-Indonesians: *Yinhua xianqu renwu guanghui suiyue* (The Role of the Chinese in Indonesia's Struggle for Independence) (2003), *Yingjie luodi shenggen shidai* (The History of Chinese Education in Indonesia) (2003) and *Minzhu gaige shidai zhengzhi fengyun* (Political Development in the Democratic and Reformasi Era) (2004). Similarly, the chief editor of *The Voice of Indonesian Chinese Magazine*, Sunardi Mulia, also published three books about Indonesian politics and economy in Chinese: *Gaigezhong de Yinni* (Indonesia in the Reformasi Era) (2000), *Fengyuzhong de Yinni* (Indonesia in Recession) (2002) and *Zhuanbianzhong de Yinni* (Indonesia in Transition) (2002).
- 23 For instance, in 2004, the chief editor of *The International Daily* was 66 years old; the chief editor of *The Voice of Indonesian Chinese Magazine* was 55 years old; the founder and adviser of *Xin Yindong* was 72 years old; and the director of *Qiandao Ribao* was 70 years old. All four of them acknowledge that most of their staff are at least 50 years of age (Interviews, various dates).
- 24 The problem of lacking skilled reporters in Chinese languages is manifested in *Kun Dian Ri Bao* (*Pontianak Daily*), which was established on 26 July 2001.

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Its publisher had to send their staff to Sarawak, to Kuching's *Sin Chew Jit Poh* (a Malaysian Chinese press) for training and 'borrow' *Sin Chew*'s staff temporarily in Pontianak to 'help out' (reported in *Pantau-Kajian dan Jurnalisme*, Year II, No. 016, August 2001. Online. Available www.pantau.or.id/txt/16/02/html).

- 25 This construction of 'Chineseness' has implications for the *pribumi* identity (see note 16).
- 26 The director of *The Archipelago Daily* told me that he does not see *The International Daily* as his rival because they are working towards the same cause of promoting Chinese culture.
- 27 The debate about whether Mandarin should be considered as the '*mu yu*' of Chinese-Indonesians started with a short article contributed by a reader criticizing an article in *The International Daily* (17 October 2003), which mentioned that '*hanyu* (Mandarin) is not our *mu yu* (mother tongue)'. The contributor defined '*mu yu*' as a language spoken by an ethnic group and insisted that Mandarin is the mother tongue of all ethnic Chinese, including those in Indonesia (*Media Aspirations* 2003, Issue 57, p. 28). In the next issue, another contributor questioned, 'How could Mandarin be a foreign language and not the mother tongue of ethnic Chinese?' (*Media Aspirations* 2004, Issue 58, p. 23). *Media Aspirations* also published articles from *Lianhe Zaobao*, a Chinese newspaper published in Singapore, which stress that Mandarin is the mother tongue of the ethnic Chinese. The popular 'Speak Mandarin Campaign', and other official policies, to inculcate the Chinese people with Chinese culture have been critiqued by Ang (2001) as counter-effects of hybridization.
- 28 Ian Ang, in her book *On Not Speaking Chinese* (2001), precisely challenges such essentialist representation and points out the urgent need to deconstruct 'Chineseness'. I have argued elsewhere that '[e]thnic identity is not based upon intrinsic characteristics such as race, blood, tradition and ancestry but varies from generation to generation and is shaped by local circumstances' (Hoon 2004a: 14).